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Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Representative Toni Walker. I am here to testify in support of Proposed Bill 5823, An Act Implementing a State-Wide Coordinate Two Generational Model.

The goal of two-generational policy is family economic stability through quality learning for the child, pathways to work for the parent, and related support services. Under an optimal two-generational structure, bureaucracy is scaled back and parent and child receive direct services and support as a family.

This policy direction, now being highlighted by the Aspen Institute, the Casey Foundation and the National Conference of State Legislators, creates efficiencies by bolstering employment and school success concurrently. It is a two for one strategy in a time where focused resources and attention to outcomes are optimal.

A two-generational approach to policy utilizes existing services and coordinates with the private sector. A true two-generational model is designed for a local fit, at the level of community, and responds to regional fiscal conditions and needs. This does not necessarily demand new funding, but does require an assessment of how funds are being used, with a focus on improved program and policy alignments that support "family outcomes."

In Connecticut, 4,100 babies are born each year to a mother who has not yet completed high school. 7,750 babies are born to a mother who does not have any type of education past high school. Eighty thousand children under the age of five live in low-income households. In these households, 60 percent have no parent working full-time, year-round. Eight in ten of the parents in these households have no post-high school diploma.

A parent's literacy level is the number one indicator of a child's literacy level. Helping parents attain literacy and work sector skills offers families a pathway to a decent income. Providing this while assuring the children are in quality care or good after school with literacy supports, offers the family focused approach. A recent National Center for Families Learning Study revealed

that coordinated two-generational learning increases student achievement, expands parent engagement, improves adult reading behaviors, and prepares parents to help their children with school.

Two generational models can be co-located, braided together through intentional place based referrals for the adult or the child in the family. Improving parents' basic skills levels in such critical areas as literacy, coupled with improved levels of educational attainment plus a sectoral approach to workforce preparation will improve employment and competitiveness.

I authored a bill this past session with Senator Bye requiring a plan on two generational operations. This plan, in the report distributed to you today by the Commission on Children and the Two Generation Workgroup, offers systems recommendation to address intergenerational barriers to school and work success.

The bill before you takes their recommendation to begin two generational pilots focused on improving advanced technical skills to increase sector-based jobs. The professional development and shared outcome data will look at gains for both the child and the parent.

The good news is that foundations are willing to partner with the state in these pilots. There is strong interest by philanthropy, both in CT and nationally, to help our state create intergenerational success through intentional planning and coordination of services for the child and the parent in low income families.

Two-generational policy provides parents with multiple pathways to economic self-sufficiency and positive parenting. These pathways include literacy, adult education, workforce development, family-supports, and mental health interventions while ensuring children access to quality infant-toddler care, preschool programs and enriching elementary school experiences.

From a policymaker's perspective, when two-generation is embed across service domains, it will inevitably reduce bureaucracy, braid together necessary services and policies, improve a coherent data collection system, advance accountability, and bolster creativity with research and evidence.

A two gen model should focus on the state's most distressed communities where the greatest gaps exist in parental education levels and children's outcomes. It should provide access to sector-specific jobs that are in demand and it should offer work supports, including child care, for low-income working families.

I would recommend that you add the Department of Education, the Department of the Office of Early Childhood and the Department of Corrections to the state partner collaborators. That way we bring in school readiness, after school and our second chance fathers.

In this difficult time for families, I thank you for your attention to this opportunity to create efficiencies through innovation.